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Regular Meeting, February 10, 1959

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Adjournment - 11:35 P. M.

Torrance, California  
February 10, 1959

MINUTES OF A PRE-COUNCIL MEETING  
OF THE TORRANCE CITY COUNCIL

The City Council of the City of Torrance met in an open Pre-Council meeting at 7:00 P. M. Tuesday, February 10, 1959, in the Council Chamber, City Hall, Torrance, California, for the purpose of continuing the Hearing on South Torrance area water pressure.

Those present for the Pre-Council Meeting were: COUNCILMEN: Beasley, Benstead, Drale, Jahn, Isen. ABSENT: COUNCILMEN: Blount, Bradford.

Mayor Isen asked the City Attorney whether this was not an informal Hearing, and the City Attorney replied it is a regular Hearing.

Mayor Isen said there were petitions from a number of people seeking relief and permission to build in the area, and asked whether formal action on those requests should not be taken after 8:00 P. M., when the Regular Meeting of the Council begins.

The City Attorney said that was right.

Mayor Isen announced to the audience that those wishing to be heard should be aware of this, that formal action would be taken after the Regular Meeting had begun.

As two Councilmen were not present, Mayor Isen asked the City Manager if he had anything to present, saying that the Council would wait until Councilman Bradford arrived, but that he had been advised Councilman Blount could not attend the meeting.

The City Manager replied that he did have material to present to the Council, and discussed the following items with them:

1) The Council had asked the City Manager for his comments regarding the sale of the old City Hall and Auditorium. The City Manager said he was subject to correction on this, and that the discussion had been held informally after the last Council meeting with no notes being taken and no direction that such a record be prepared until the discussion was over. A paper which the City Manager distributed to the Councilmen contained the notes as Assistant City Manager Bone recalled them.

The City Council had asked that the City Manager get prices for an appraisal of the old City Hall and the Auditorium. He had checked with the banks on this, and had found that as a rule they use their own appraisers, but the California Bank had said they use two firms now and then, one the American Appraisal Co. and the other Marshall & Stevens.

The City Manager said he had checked with both of those firms, and American Appraisal had said they would charge us about \$1600 for the appraisal, and Marshall & Stevens, who have done this for us before, said they would charge us about \$250 or \$300 to bring their 1956 appraisal of those buildings up to date.

The City Manager said Marshall & Stevens had done insurance appraisals at the old City Hall and Auditorium as well as the last appraisal we had there.

After a brief discussion, the Mayor told the City Manager it was the consensus of the Council that Marshall & Stevens should make the appraisal for the City.

2) The City Manager said at the last Council meeting, the Council had considered 3 requests from the School Board for sidewalks, and it had been thought those would be the last such requests, however, another is needed on the north side of 182nd St. between Ermanita and Yukon. This will cost between \$500 and \$600.

Councilman Jahn said he would like to see this location on a map, and asked where the map is the Council had asked for.

The City Manager said it is being prepared, and that small maps are available.

Mayor Isen returned to the matter of the sidewalk, and asked the City Manager if it might not serve a useful purpose to hold a joint meeting of the Board of Education and the Council, to see if they will

participate in solving any of these problems.

The City Manager thought this might be useful, saying some members of the Staff have been working with the School administrative staff and they have been working towards combination playgrounds and parks.

Mayor Isen thought a meeting might be in order.

Councilman Beasley expressed his sympathy with this need, however, he thought that perhaps we should investigate the information submitted by the City Attorney that an Involuntary Assessment District might be formed under the 1911 Act and the adjacent property owners pay for these walks.

Councilman Drale said this is Edison property.

The Mayor and Councilman Jahn asked if they would not pay for this sidewalk.

The City Attorney said he had talked to a representative of their company, and they will be glad to give us the land without cost to the City, but they will not agree to put in the improvements.

Councilman Bradford joined the meeting at 7:17 P. M.

The various possibilities on this sidewalk were discussed at length, with ideas being proposed by the Councilmen, such as a berm at the side of the street which could be marked with yellow paint as a school walk.

The City Attorney thought this property might already have been dedicated to the City, but the City Manager did not know whether it had been or not.

Councilman Drale said this is where the freeway will cross 182nd Street and it would be wasteful to put anything permanent there for that reason. He thought asphalt sidewalks such as we installed from the Bishop Montgomery High School to the Redondo Beach City Limits would serve.

Mayor Isen thought the Hearing should be continued now, as Councilman Bradford was present.

Mayor Isen called the Council to order to continue the Hearing on:

SOUTH TORRANCE AREA WATER PRESSURE: Public Hearing to determine whether the South Torrance area served by the Narbonne Water Co. Nos. 2 and 3, because of the low water pressure, should be declared a hazard area (continued from January 27 Meeting of the Council).

The City Attorney said he had only one additional witness in this, Fire Chief Benner. At the last meeting the Council had requested him to investigate the situation there caused by the low water pressure as it affects control of fires at the oil wells in that area. He said he had asked Chief Benner to prepare information on this, which he has done.

The City Attorney asked Fire Chief Benner if he was prepared to report on his investigation of the area with the matter of fighting oil well fires in mind.

Chief Benner said he had made such investigation, and was prepared to report.

The City Attorney asked if the water pressure in the area causes any problems in fighting oil well fires, and Chief Benner said it does.

The Fire Chief said under the present water supply, the necessary lines could not be supplied with water. Under an adequate system, this could be done.

The City Attorney asked if it is possible to operate fire hoses from a hydrant under the conditions existing in that area at present.

Chief Benner said in most areas he could not; in rolling in, they tie to a hydrant and until the engine gets back they have almost nothing there. Under an adequate system, they have enough pressure to operate the lines until the engine gets back to boost the pressure.

The City Attorney asked if the problems outlined here would be factors where an oil derrick or tank was involved.

The Fire Chief said it would. He added that in the past in fighting derrick fires he has found we could do nothing if the fire gets above the second platform on the derricks, so far as most of that area is concerned.

The City Attorney asked the Fire Chief if in his opinion anything was needed in that area to make the water lines adequate for fire fighting.

Fire Chief Benner replied that more adequate facilities were needed there and more adequate pressure in the system.

The City Attorney asked the Fire Chief to sum up his statements as to what, in his opinion, has been the effect of the water pressure and volume in that area on the effectiveness of fire fighting.

The Fire Chief replied that with what is there his Department cannot do a good job. They can go only so far with the water there, and could not hope to do as good a job as usual under the circumstances there.

The City Attorney asked if this meant that in his opinion, the water supply and pressure there present a hazard as to fire fighting, and the Fire Chief replied that they do.

The City Attorney asked if the Council had any questions they wished to ask of the Fire Chief.

There were none.

The City Attorney said he had felt that the Fire Chief alone could give the Council adequate information on this in his official capacity.

Mayor Isen asked if anyone present wished to be heard.

Mr. Walter Anderson of the law firm of Denison, Dietrich & Anderson, 3460 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles 5, came forward. He said he wished to be heard as attorney for the Narbonne Ranch Water Co. No. 3. He told the Council that the Water Co. #3 is composed of about 381 stockholders who have property in the district and therefore have automatically become stockholders. There are 5 directors, who serve at a very low rate of pay, and that this is really a labor donated. He said he was not able to understand these Hearings really well, as he had not been filled in with the Notices, and said he was not aware that sufficient notices had been sent to the residents of the area, and he asked under which section of the Code the Council is proceeding.

The City Attorney said this is not under the Code.

Mr. Anderson said that the Council was proceeding, then, without jurisdiction, and he believed this to be wholly out of order.

Councilman Beasley told Mr. Anderson that the City Council had certain responsibilities to maintain the public health and welfare and safety of the citizens.

Mr. Anderson replied that the powers of the Council were derived from the Charter granted by the Legislature.

Mayor Isen said the Council would dispense with the Hearing if that was what was wanted, as the Hearing was being held as a courtesy.

Mr. Anderson said he did not think this was a courtesy to his client. He asked if the Council would hear him any further.

Mayor Isen said the Council would hear him.

Mr. Anderson said the Council had exceeded their jurisdiction by refusing to issue permits for building in that area.

Councilman Jahn told him that building was restricted there entirely on a temporary basis and entirely apart from this matter.

Mr. Anderson felt the Council had no right to prohibit building on property people own, and mentioned that zoning must be changed if building is prohibited.

Councilman Jahn asked the City Attorney under which section of the Code the Council had acted in restricting building in that area, and the City Attorney said they had acted under the inherent power of the Council.

The City Attorney went on to say that to make that law, Hearings would be necessary. He believed the Council wished to hear the facts before taking any action.

The City Attorney thought argument about this power of the Council would be properly addressed to the Court.

Mr. Anderson said the only powers the Council has are pursuant to the Charter, and any action not taken thereunder was not proper.

Mayor Isen said the purpose of this Hearing was to see how drastic the situation is there. If they find it dangerous enough, it might be necessary for us to expand the Torrance Water District lines and offer the people better water service.

Mr. Anderson said he had not had time to research this, but the Water Company has served the people there for many years. So far as paralleling their lines are concerned, he said the City may be able to do this, but they would take sharp issue with the City taking or confiscating the water system. They have been serving the area almost without profit, he said, and he felt the Council should consider the matter of payment even if this is carried out by condemnation.

Councilman Bradford thought no one operates a business without profit unless it is by accident. The Company has served the area for many years. The problem here is the low water pressure. He explained that the Plumbing Code requirements as adopted by the City require certain water pressure, and there are large portions of that area where the required pressure is not available. People who build there and whose installations do not have enough water pressure cannot get permits to occupy their homes because they do not have the required pressure there. He told Mr. Anderson that if the water company could boost the pressure to meet the requirements that would be another thing.

Mr. Anderson said the conditions there have existed for many years. He referred to the Fire Chief's statements of earlier this evening, and said he knew of instances in the area where derrick fires had been fought successfully. He said he knew of no specific instances where the water pressure had been checked.

Councilman Bradford told him they have a lot of old steel pipe lines, which usually build up; what was installed 25 years ago may not be good today.

Councilman Jahn explained that there is so much building going on there that the area is changing rapidly. Every house built there would decrease the water available. The water system is so inadequate that we are faced with the problem of furnishing fire fighting or sanitary facilities to the people without the water needed.

Mr. Anderson asked if fire fighting is not the main factor of this hearing, and Councilman Jahn explained to him that it is not. Councilman Jahn outlined the State's Plumbing Code requirement for 15# of water pressure for safe operation of sanitary facilities. He explained that under the Code, we are forced to deny final inspection to the homes which do not have enough water pressure. That works a real hardship on the people who build.

Mr. Anderson asked how long we had been issuing permits out there and where the water pressure is below the requirements.

Councilman Jahn said these Hearings were brought about by the fact here that we had been forced to deny permits.

In reply to a request from Mayor Isen that he summarize his position, Mr. Anderson referred to an article on fire fighting in a manual published by the American Municipal Association, saying on Page 301, under the title of 'Technique of Fire Fighting', the report states that when only 5# of water pressure is available good results may be obtained if the pumper knows his business. He added that a pumper is always used anyway. He said the Company is equally interested in a solution to the problems. He said they would like to put in new lines and storage tanks to bring the pressure up. The expense to the stockholders would be very great. They have gone to the County, and the County has indicated they may allow them to come into their District. The County will not have an estimate on the cost until about the 13th of this month. He asked for more time to send that material to the Council before the Council makes any decision on it.

Mr. Anderson had a report from Mr. Alderman of the firm of Alderman & Swift, and they estimate the cost of replacing the pipeline necessary in that district, Narbonne Ranch Water Co. #3, and putting in the 100,000 gallon tanks, would be about \$157,500.00. He asked that the Council refrain from any further prohibitive action until the Company has

heard from the County. He suggested this even though he said he had been advised that they had estimated the cost of refurbishing the system to be much higher, perhaps as high as \$250,000.

Mayor Isen asked if anyone else wished to be heard, and Mr. Anderson produced Mr. Gannon, an employee of the Company, who said the steel lines are not closed up in that system.

Mayor Isen said under the current conditions, the City cannot issue occupancy permits under the State and City Plumbing Codes.

Councilman Drae asked Mr. Anderson why they had not asked the City for consideration as they had asked the County; he said the City is trying to protect the people in the area. He asked why they had not requested from us tentative prices on what we can do for them and for how much.

Mr. Anderson said they would be delighted to have the City submit a proposal to them.

The Council recessed at 7:50 P. M., the end of the Pre-Council Meeting.